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Workers of the Writers' Program of the
WPA in Ohio, comp. (1940)
The National Road in Song and Story.

ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY

The National Road

In Song And Story

FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY

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[illegible] GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Printed in U. S. A.

THE NATIONAL ROAD

in song and story

Compiled by

Workers of the Writers' Program
of the Work Projects Administration
in the State of Ohio

Sponsored by

The Ohio State Archaeological
and Historical Society

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HARRY GRAFF, *State Supervisor*
The Ohio Writers' Project

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Foreword

THE year 1940 marks the centennial of the completion of "The Main Street of America"—the "Old National Road." It was this historic artery that afforded to the Eastern colonies access to the vast domain lying west of the Alleghenies, and which came to constitute the life line tying together the far flung components of the American republic.

The genesis of what was affectionately termed the "National Pike" was concurrent with the birth of the Ohio Commonwealth, and its completion a century ago was an epochal event. For a while it was "time's noblest offspring" but, as the course of empire took its way, it gradually shared importance with the canals and other means of travel and transportation. And now, the clumsy ox-drawn vehicle, the stage coach, and the horse and buggy, convoying the humble and the great, are but memories. And so, too, are the canal systems.

The canals are gone, perhaps forever. But not so the National Pike. With the advent of automotive transportation, it has assumed foremost importance and, as U. S. Route 40, it may be traversed from Atlantic tidewater to Pacific shoals.

Credit for research, compilation and preparation of the manuscript of this booklet devolves upon the Ohio Writers' Project. The illustrations were supplied by the Ohio Art Project. The Ohio Chamber of Commerce, and numerous local civic organizations have made possible its distribution.

The Old National Road is symbolic of the beginnings, the development and the coming of age of our Nation and our State. It is hoped that this booklet will crystallize this sentiment in the minds of those who may read it.

H. C. SHETRONE, *Director,*
The Ohio State Archaeological
and Historical Society.

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MADONNA OF THE TRAIL
NSDAR MEMORIAL
PIONEER MOTHERS
COVERED WAGON DAYS

The Road

THE NATIONAL ROAD is one of several highways that cross the Nation. It is not the Lincoln Highway, with new fame; it has the long tradition of the first national road, the path that brought the Colonies across the Appalachians and spread democratic union. It was driven west from the Colonies after the Revolution, when men through exuberance or necessity took up again the western journey that had begun in Europe.

As a rule, men do not build roads in order to settle a country. They use whatever means are at hand—waterways or animal paths—and make their way forward. But when they settle and raise their families and want civilization, they build roads from the old homestead to the new and to their neighbors.

The National Road did not begin settlement of the trans-Appalachian country. Explorers, traders, missionaries—these people had traveled the Great Lakes and the rivers and the forests, and founded towns in the Old Northwest. After the Ordinance of 1787 opened the Ohio country to general settlement, a small, but important, migration began, founding towns, cutting farms into the wilderness.

As settlement was made, the pioneer families started to produce foodstuffs and handmade goods. When they had surpluses, they looked around for markets. Good roads were desirable, but rare, and commerce lagged.

In 1796 Congress authorized Ebenezer Zane to open a road across Ohio that would connect Wheeling, West Virginia, with Limestone, Kentucky. Zane's Trace resulted; completed

in 1798, it went west to Zanesville, then southwest through Lancaster and Chillicothe to the Ohio River.

During the years in which the State of Ohio was being formed, plans for a road through it westward were being discussed here and in the East. In 1806 Congress provided for the building of a road from Cumberland, Maryland, to Wheeling, West Virginia. Work went forward with few difficulties until the road reached the Ohio River. Then petitions were drawn up that the road be extended west. Argument and Congressional debate and Presidential veto delayed the project until 1825, when Congress consented to the extension. On July 4, 1825, amid speeches and fire-crackers and refreshments, ground for the road in Ohio was broken at St. Clairsville.

The road crept west section by section; it reached Zanesville in 1826, Columbus in 1833, and Springfield in 1838. The stretch from Springfield to the Indiana line was cleared in 1840, but it was not an improved road until many decades later.

The State of Ohio was now neatly bisected—and conveniently tied together—East to West. The National Road did not, however, stop at the Indiana boundary; later additions brought it across the Indiana and Illinois plains to the Mississippi. As U. S. 40 it continued west across the great prairie States, crossed the Rocky Mountains in Colorado, struck north to Salt Lake City, then west through Nevada, over the Sierra Nevada Mountains to San Francisco.

Traffic in Ohio did not, of course, await total completion of the road within the State. Almost from the day it was first begun at St. Clairsville, the road became an important local artery connecting with the East. It was significant as the first

great thrust of the United States over the Appalachians; and as it was extended west, it became the great national highway for Western migration.

Taverns, mile markers, a few museum pieces, and possibly several other traces remain of the life on the National Road during its heyday from about 1830 to the Civil War. Many people important still—men like Henry Clay, women like Jenny Lind—traveled the road and stopped at the taverns. And there are many stories about them—for example, the one about William Henry Harrison and Martin Van Buren, who happened to be campaigning in the same locality, just west of Columbus, in 1840. "Old Tippecanoe" turned up at a tavern, his arm in a sling from too much handshaking, and ordered drinks for the house; while Van Buren made the rounds for tea in the politest society.

The people who lived along the pike were envied, chiefly for the news they gathered from the most colorful characters on the National Road—the teamsters with pack trains, the wagoners with the great Conestoga freight ships, the stage drivers with the gaudy coaches. Each had distinct habits and moved in separate circles of road society. The wagoners, for example, drove long distances and stopped at wagon houses, set back from the road to allow room for parking the wagons and tying up the horses; whereas the stagecoach drivers were relieved at frequent intervals and stayed at the handsome inns along with the passengers. The wagoners, and to some extent the muleteers, were like the keelboatmen on the rivers—tough, boisterous, hard-drinking, full-blooded. They ate and drank and argued and brawled with the full vigor stimulated by a hard, healthy life. Great men, such as Tom Corwin, rose from the ranks of the wagoners.

The stage coach drivers were chosen for their driving skill, weight and strength, and sociability. Their reputations were about like those of today's movie heroes; traveling celebrities often selected their drivers and were themslves honored by the association. They rode in gay coaches named for Presidents and explorers and Indian chiefs and other famous people—on stage coach lines called the Oyster, the June Bug, the Good Intent, and other peculiar things.

Those were not the only people on the move. Whole families came along the National Road in their own small canvas-covered wagons; individuals on foot and horseback frequently ambled by. These travelers encamped near the taverns so that they could mingle with the fun-lovers without going to the expense of lodging in the building.

After the Civil War, when the railroad began to supersede other modes of transportation, travel on the National Road declined. North of the road, cities were enlarging with new heavy industries; south of it, the old centers of skilled industry, such as Cincinnati, adapted themselves more slowly to the new machine age. Then interurban electric railways drove tracks along the road, and people traveled for pleasure—a trend stimulated sharply when the automobile became practical. Within recent years a vast volume of freight has been carried on the road.

Such, briefly, is the pageant of travel on the National Road. It is hard to overestimate the importance of the road in spreading the products and people of the United States and at the same time integrating the country. The National Road has been the migratory, exchange, and unifying medium of a new Nation, and it is still the carrier of a huge interstate traffic that continues its historic functions.

The Song

Poet:

Hear, Traveler!
The road,
slipping between hillsides,
grows garrulous with age,
wishes to speak.

Traveler, listen:
This road
US-40, Ohio,
is important,
the National Road,
with a history.
This road takes rank with
the Oregon Trail,
the Sante Fe Trail,
the Northwest Passage
(still undiscovered),
and the golden road
to Samarkand.
This road, I say, is important,
the first travelers' way
through the forest.
Where dust rose
from the horses' hooves,
where whips cracked
and drivers' curses,
where iron rims
of the wagons jolted,
the smooth purr
of the auto pours
cloud-easy motion.

Now, Traveler — the Road.

Road:

It was long, the completion —
section after section
layer after layer
rippling westward —
it was long . . . it took years. . . .

Up in the mountains,
holding their sides,
bending to valleys,
through night and day and weather,
time forwards I have wondered,
longing for completion;
and in the hot grasses,
hiding and sleeping,
in the soft grass lengths,
leaning with wind,
I dreamed of meeting
the mighty Mississippi.

Nation:

It was a hard job,
fighting the rock
ribs of the mountains.
And at first
you were merely
a blaze in the forest,
but soon became
a track for mules
with serpentine trains.
Like a tendril of ivy,
you clung to the mountains,
vine-grasping the roughness,
at times growing swiftly —
Jonah's gourd swiftness —
a tentacle seeking
the heart of a continent.

And I remembered
you as a buffalo trace,
where the hooves
of the hump-beasts
pounded the earth
to a pavement.

Road:

The buffalo!
I remember their trampling;
they built me
with music of thunder,
shook by feet asunder,
I knew them well:
liquid eyes in massive heads,
shaggy-haired, low legs racing
the path they bared
from the saline shore of Baltimore
to Ohio's fertile land;
beyond the dense and thick-shrubbed forests
their dust-clad thunder ran,
and rolled off into quiet
with the coming-in of man.
They beat my pattern hard
on the slippery river fords,
the soft tangle of the canebrakes,
the bare solid on the ridges.

Nation:

Others came:
the people of the mounds;
the Indian with his singing names for rivers,
marking his way
on saplings
like that one,
now a crooked
tree pattern
on the National Road.

Poet:

Such trails as these had interlaced
the land God blessed the most;
and trails the hunting Indian traced
became the highway for a host.

The strands were caught up and entwined,
twisted towards the setting sun,
and the national motto's well designed
to fit the road: "From many, one."

Road:

And I can tell how all this came to be,
how all these paths were joined in me.
From Cumberland to Wheeling first I trailed,
across the Appalachian Mountains sailed,
against the Allegheny uplands fought,
into the valley travelers brought,
turned in sweeping spirals west,
joining paths that were thought best,
steadily through the valleys swept,
where silence and a wildness slept.

O and those lands
through which I sped
were beautiful,
though full of dread
and stained where men
were dead
from violence.
The land was savage then
(claws and wings)
where farmers
are at peace
with soil and man
and hoe
the corn for bread.

I was the slow course of empire,
barely preceding it.
Along the barren Eastern rocks
where the Colonies chafed,
between mountains and sea,
the small, torn trails
of bridle-paths
linked stream to stream
and town to town.

Ben Franklin,
loyal servant to the king,
for trade was westward seeking.
In the year 1744
the English, westward sneaking
for land, sought the Iroquois.

Through the wild, bushy stand
of this virgin timber land
(tree on aged tree)
Then came a band of men
who had been hired when
the King had named his plan
"Ohio Company."
They had to cut
and widen out
a one-man trail
made before
by Nemacolin,
whose Indian eye
and hand
had marked
a sinuous trail
along his people's paths.

In this small group
was Washington,
young surveyor

to be purveyor
of freedom
to the Nation.

Nation:

It was a time of struggle!
(French and British fight)
O the great days of battle!
(fleur-de-lys on the waters,
the St. Lawrence, the Lakes,
the Father of Waters;
Union Jack on the coastline,
furling west, and north
toward Canada.)

1755. Braddock marched
an army through.
Washington, aide-de-camp,
knew the forest.
Slashing through,
four abreast
to Laurel Hill
turning south,
they cut this wagon road
in 1755.

Foolhardy Braddock marched along,
and the Indians hummed his funeral song,
and there was musket and martial music,
arrows humming and crackling guns . . .
(musket crack and arrow song)
Braddock stumbling in wild abandon . . .
(Nations gasp and cry and cheer)
men reeling with silent sabre strokes
Poor Braddock, dying in a barbarous meadow.
(Washington bought
the Great Meadows
where Braddock died.)

Road:
And all this time
I slept in the mind
of Washington
through all the turmoil
of the fighting
the shouting
and the clamor.

Poet:
Who spread this aisle
between the arching trees?
Who marked the course
and charted out the way?
It ran through all
the tortuous valleys, climbed
the slippery hills,
and slithered through the vales,
then crept out on the prairie
like a snake,
sinuous
and beautiful.
No man could vision this,
this mighty spread
of aisle for league
on weary league—
all through the Territory,
winding to the Mississippi,
inching
towards
the ruffling prairie,
mile on mile
of gasping grass.

Nation:
A man is nothing.
This goes beyond
the brain of man,

beyond his finite powers;
it's shaped
by great events —
like the urge that
forced Leviathan
to hulk up from the deep
and batter out
his life upon the shore.

1776. Revolution
(tea and taxes)
uniforms and drums
bright red uniforms and drums,
minute men in farmer's clothes—
bright blood stains on any clothes —
and liberty,
a nation born,
a bright new flag
of happy stars
and memorable
stripes.

1776. Two Zanes,
from the East,
bent west
and settled Wheeling.

Road:

Out of the Pennsylvania mountains,
down the valley of Ohio, leaping
the river, threading the forest,
white blaze on dark trees,
I came,
seeking Zane.
That was the forest!
the greatest stand
of hard timber
ever seen;

I ran through it
like a bandsaw
through walnut.

Nation:

1784. A man with a map
on a rough table
in the crude cabin,
peering at the map, searching
a way over the broken backs
of frowning mountains,
pince-nez on his nose,
staring at the map.
There!
the door rattled,
a stride across
the earthen floor,
the young man, Gallatin.
(In Tennessee
a town was named for him.)
Speaking to Washington,
"Cumberland Gap Number Two"
(he was certain and pointing)
"is the only logical way."

And Gallatin and Jefferson,
the Ohio Company,
and others
looking west
with vision,
in 1787
by an act
of Congress
made the Old Northwest
ready for the settler.

Then over me came families
full of the west-hunger,
bringing change.

Slowly they came,
a small trickle
spotting the wilderness,
settlers, squatters,
holding the land
by rifle rights,
watching the wary Indian.

Road:

Ho, I remember their coming,
fair-skinned men of the East,
contentious,
loud-voiced,
urging the horses
straining in mud
with great Conestogas.

They came in under the frown of the savage
(guns and frowns and arrows);
they cut their clearings like sores in the forest,
new-raw on dark green,
pushing the strength
of a brash new nation.

Then the war-cry started ringing,
Indian hatred started singing
paeans against squatters
staining shores of clear, cool waters;
screaming women, musket powder,
made the conflict all the louder.
Came "Mad" Anthony with horses,
routed all the Indian forces.
This occurred in '94
and opened wide my settlers' door.

Ohio:

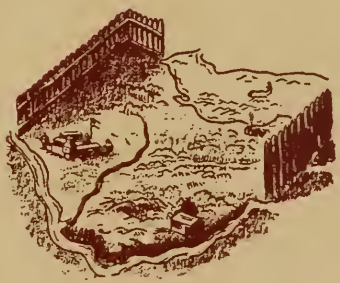
I enter here,
though not formally,
through Ebenezer Zane,

who made a way
from Wheeling
to Zanesville
then southward
to Limestone
(now *M*aysville),
Kentucky.

*M*asses from the south and east
pushing to the north and west,
crossing my beautiful rivers,
crowding my tumbling hills,
gouging my plains with the plow,
tearing my forest with axes —
these,
settling me,
trampled the road
into being.

Nation:

1802. *M*en gathered
in solemn session
(people and papers and talk)
four times
gravely thinking.
A new State?
*Y*es, it was good.
Said the leaders of law:
"We give you an *A*ct
to *E*nable the people
to establish as fact
the State of Ohio."
I marked my property
in 1803.



Poet:

Ohio,
I have dreamed of seeing
a chain of people moving;
and in my dream these
smoke-thin ghosts of men
(great bodies, full curses,
hard with the bottle, hard with life)
were singing, singing,
looking
west.

THE PIONEERS

We heard of Ohio,
we heard of the road,
we crossed the stern mountains
with the lightest of load.

We followed the river
where it wandered between
the hills and the heights
and the meadow's rich green.

We came with guns ready,
with listening ear;
who knew when the warwhoop
would strike us a-near?

We came with the rifle
preceding the axe,
our cattle urged forward
by smarting whipcracks.

We knew not the glamor
of the frontier romance —
books sold by the thousand
in England and France.

Our life was held close
in rough, calloused hands
toiling darkness to darkness
on thorn-bearing lands.

The lands farther west
were those full of gold,
which Spaniards through finding
and force could still hold.

But we, we had cabins,
had children and farms,
and we couldn't listen
to gold's siren-song charms.

And though we dreamed fondly
of making that quest,
we had traveled our distance. . . .
Our sons took the West.

Road:

Those were the first settlers,
(after explorers and trappers)
clearing land for cabins —
tree-rich land of Ohio
and mellow flood plains—
before I was builded.

Ohio:

They built business
and commerce
and had much
to sell.
But roads
to the East
were rutty
enough to hold
a horse.

The wisdom
of the men
who gave me
statehood
had provided
for a sinking fund;
money saved
till 1806
was found enough
to start
the National Road.

Road:

The work began
in 1808;
I first reached out
in Ohio
at St. Clairsville,
July Fourth,
1825.
Statesmen
spaded the earth;
there was clamor of fire-works
and spouting of words,
liberal drinking
and raising of glasses.
That was good. Then
came excitement
and fever-straining men,
hammers thumping,
picks pinging,
great, strong bodies
making a highway.

Every soul
that traveled
ten miles
of my length

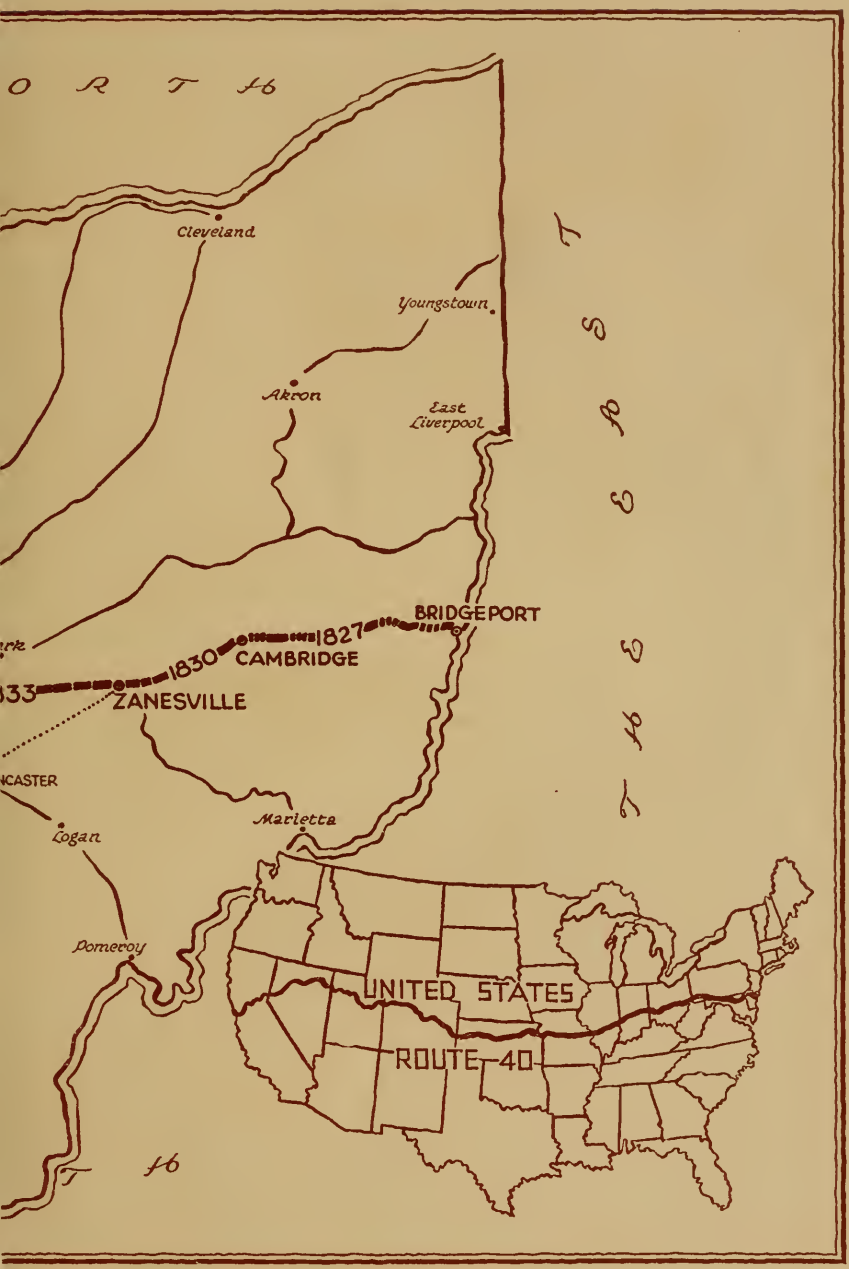
paid toll,
life blood,
my renewal.
Narrow-rimmed wheels
that cut my surface
sometimes to the binding —
these I charged most;
so wheels were broad.
The sharp hooves of cattle,
the iron horse-shoes,
even the slow,
heavy-shod oxen
dug deep
through the limestone,
and everything paid me toll. . . .

And in the winter
(if you were behind the wagoner)
you could see him cut the ice
with a gadget like a sled
hooked under the sliding hind-wheels,
or with a chain
or a thing like a plow
somehow stuck
upon the rear.

Ohio:

There were
men of the road
hauling freight
like the
keelboatmen
on rivers.
The hearty wagoners
loved food
and whiskey and songs,
old stories, lusty jokes,
and deep laughter.

The National Road
T h e
Toledo
Sandusky
Findlay
Lima
Marion
Bellefontaine
Delaware
Marysville
Greenville
ENGLEWOOD
SPRINGFIELD
COLUMBUS
1840
1839
1838
London
Eaton
DAYTON
Circleville
CHILLICOT
Cincinnati
ZANE'S
West Union
Portsmouth
Aberdeen
MAYSVILLE
T h e
S O


O R T H
Cleveland
Youngstown
Akron
East Liverpool
BRIDGEPORT
1827
1830
CAMBRIDGE
ZANESVILLE
Marietta
Logan
Pomeroy
UNITED STATES
ROUTE 40
T H
T h e E a s t

At night
they lay
in a large half-circle,
at the vast fireplace.
Their horses,
never stabled,
wore a blanket,
from a feed trough ate
at the rear of the freight.
And a wagon house yard
on many a night
held many tired horses
by the side
of many heavy wagons,
while inside
many swarthy drivers
acted as described.

Poet:

In summer they slept by campfire light
under slim breezes and the starry night,
their bulky sweat-flecked horses right
near the wagoner's snores.

Road:

A coachman's life
was gentler strife
of dash and whirl and whoa!
then off again
with a freshened team
to another
"Giddap, let's go."

There was dust galore
and rickety-rock noise
of wriggling door
and creaking floor
and the driver's voice

and the coach's horns
as it madly tore
past well-stocked barns.
Then the coachman's roar
as faster, faster still
it gave its passengers
a thrill
or chill
(or spill,
though rare).
The swaying top
on its leather springs
took up again
its rhythmic swing
past the crunch, crunch,
of a freighter string,
with a galloping rush
rolled into a ring
of excited folk,
where the tavern king
filled his hands to bring
the welcome of the house.

And then, the meal!

Nation:

What game and fish
and crops
and fellowship
were made
for aught but
a coach stop?

Road:

It took skill of great order
to keep the coach to the border,
as the charioteer
the coach would veer

past rock-spined ledges
down sharp hill-edges,
hands tense,
feet braced.
Around and away
dived the horses,
their manes and
their forces
tightly strained,
to the valley
to the roadside
to the relay post,
where the harness was stripped
and fresh horses departed.

And once
there came
down the road
one of the stages,
hard-driven, careening;
it made a bad turn,
spilling
Henry Clay
from the Concord Coach.
"Kentucky Clay," he muttered,
"meeting Ohio limestone."

Poet:

Those old Concord coaches!
(in museums now)
When you sat on the driver's seat
you could see all around —
up to the motionless blue above
and down to the whizzing ground
over and past the forest greens,
across their rolling tops,
far to the front
and to left and right

to where the horizon drops.
But those hills and colors,
those sights and streams,
that sky and clouds,
they're all gone now
and are merely the stuff
which the dreamer sees.

Ohio:

And laws were passed
to care for the road—
a dungeon
and bread and water
or a fine of 500
for those who'd dare
deface the National Road.

And I compelled each person
to contribute two days
towards your repair
annually.

So great was the traffic,
so large the number
of people who traveled
and tons of freight,
that towns laid stones,
a misleading line,
to lure the profit
off the National Road.

Road:

The year was 1840,
a lazy date with history,
when I reached
the level plains
of Indiana.

Traveler:

Then did you stop
and rest, content
to grow old,
wrinkling
undisturbed?

Road:

No! the restless
energy of the Nation
pushed me further
into the newness and rawness
rough with challenge.
And afterwards
along that stretch
came trail blazers
anxious to leave,
anxious to trammel
new forest.
I followed their lead.

Let me tell you,
what man has felt I've felt.
I've known the rhythmic, ceaseless
fall of hammers,
I've known the breathless, sweatful
afternoons
when there was no wind
springing up among the hills
that cling to the streams
like timid lovers.

I strove to reach the prairie,
in a westward push
that brought the Nation
to the princely Rockies
(pile on pile of tiring,
heavy stone)

and beyond.
And all that time
I was alive,
beating with traffic.

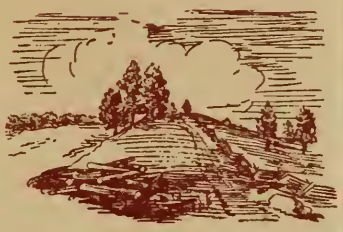
I left behind
the many-tongued taverns,
the relay stations for stages,
the tollgates clustering
the woodpiles cluttering
the roadway,
fringed thickly with farms
quietly watching the pageant. . . .

O and I leaped West!
I leaped west with the hungerers, the never-tired dreamers!
I ran across the prairies with fire-speed
I slunk through brown foothills
I splashed through the rivers
I clattered a wild way toward the mountains,
the god-forsaken Rockies
geyser-rilling with triumphant
westward-singing people —
the course, not of empire,
but of emperors who cried,
"We'll cross the Continent!"

Poet:

And those stay-at-homes, those farmers,
what did they think and say?

Road:

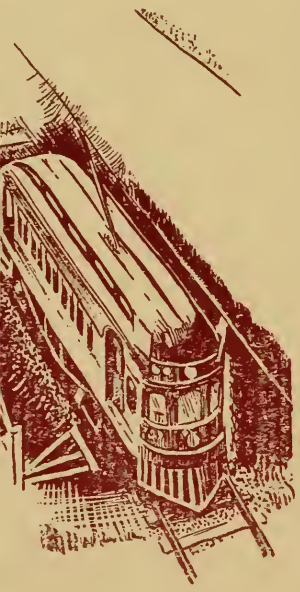


They spoke of all the restless men
that came in here and left again;
they spoke of all the fabulous lands
awaiting those same nervous hands
along the west, where El Dorado
and all the rich dream lands of shadow

the solid world has ever known
vanish under the falling sun.
They spoke of all these roamers' crimes,
deplored the passing of good old times;
they preached to their sons that home was best,
while their eyes were hungry with looking west.

Nation:

Came a chug of smoke
and a little black bug,
with a big, spouting funnel,
rolling thin-spoked wheels
on threads called steel
over the hills and through
in tunnels.
And he grew and he grew
and he pulled and he pulled
till he stretched
from sea to sea.



Poet:

Years of slackened motion
on the National Road
while the Nation
reached the other ocean.

Road:

Then a spark gave power,
and cars click-clicked
along the tracks
that flanked me.
A thread of light
lay on the way;
a thin horn moaned.
The cattle bellowed,
the horses jumped,
the farmer cussed,
and pulled his shay
aside.

Nation:

About 1908
a growl-chug voice,
four turning legs,
changed the transportation
and the ways
of living
in a Nation.

Road:

I have to wear
a stiff front shirt made out of cement
and work at night through hours (spent
by former drivers sound in bed)
now filled with rumbling tire-tread.

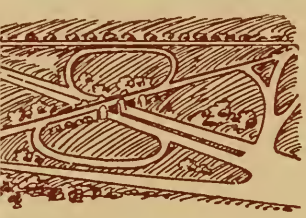
Nation:

From coast to coast
the longest stretch
of paved road
in the world!

Ohio:

Engineering improvements
and features of note
I might here mention
are part of the road.

No more quick bumps
as you ride on cement
wherever is placed a steel bar,
instead of the former black tar;
here is a new kind of joint,
"Non-extruding expansion."
The point
is comfort,
ease-floating.



Another wrinkle in
a new road's life
is the clover leaf,
a way designed
to lessen time
and traffic strife.

I have had great trouble.
Between railroads and tollroads,
the canal and the river,
(railroads running steel
through the river,
life line of the valley)
there was clamor and uproar,
nowhere peace in the valley.

Where the boat-horn had made sweet music
the steam-whistle screamed out its signals.
And people began telling time,
not by clocks or by watches,
but by Number Four's whistle
at the local grade crossing.
"She's on time," they'd say,
or "She's two minutes late."

Road:

And now your commerce wheels
a mighty tide along;
there's not a soul but feels
the fervor of the song
sung by leviathans,
with wheels of juggernaut;
where horses used to prance,
they move like soul-seared thought.
Their eyes split up the darkness;
they need no other light.
I am your pride, O Nation,
symbolic of your might.

Poet:

Nahum, the prophet, foretold
thousands of years ago:
The chariots shall rage
in the streets,
they shall jostle
one against another
in the broad ways:
they shall seem like torches,
they shall run like the lightnings.

Nation:

From coast to coast
the longest stretch
of paved road
in the world!

Stiff with pride and hard cement,
the road lies
between stately rows
of wire-draped poles—
monotonous throng
of people's voices.

Poet:

Gone the loud color of drivers,
with their great noises!
"The noise of a whip,
and the noise
of the rattling
of the creaking wheels,
of the thudding
of the prancing horses. . . ."

Road:

But there are other noises:
the snicker of tire
treads on the concrete,

the feverish, strident
blast of the klaxon
(out-stentoring Stentor!)
the labored throb
of trucks straining
against the hill slopes.

Poet:

No more the great, dark forests!
their depths and secrecies no more!

Ohio:

Those depths and secrecies were danger.
See the Madonna:
a woman, with a man's courage.
her breath caught up in fear,
an arm for a babe
an arm for a rifle
against danger.
Pain and hard work
and women to endure them
and bear the sons
for a growing Nation:
". . . we came with brave women . . .
consecrated to . . . making ten tall sons . . .
where . . . only one savage had been."
That was the stuff of roadways.

Poet:

No more the glad, brave nights of sleepless stars,
no more the rough-hewn friendliness of tavern bars.

Nation:

Never again, and better so!
It took hard men to sleep outside —
skin, a blanket, then frost —
and the barroom fights were murders.

Now there are tourist cabins,
row on neat row,
water inside
or just outside
the door.
Health and cleanliness
and well-cooked food
and no waiting
for the seasons.

Jutile contriver of dreams!
Only the road-seekers
know the road!

Ohio:

Only the road-seekers!
they know
the marvelous sweep
of sunrise colors
topping the forward hill;
know greys, pastels,
grey mornings
when the mist
is damp with rain;
know the thundering
beat of raindrops,
the blistering
of the sun.
They hear the turtle dove mourning,
the acrid crow gloating,
the majestic wheeling
of the buzzard,
and the sumac's
torch upon the hills,
the red and yellow
and gold and haze
of Indian summer,
and the strange delight
of far new places!

Road:

Only they know
the lure of changing skyline.
Only they know
my proud triumph over rivers,
over mountains,
my speed over the plains,
my weltering in the cities,
my proud contemplation
of two brave seas!
Only they know
the sleepiness of farms,
the sharp whiteness
of my winter glittering,
the drip of tree blossoms,
trees arched on the road,
the long aisles of trees,
the majestic monotone
of telegraph poles,
my sharp turns
and sudden surprises!

Sing, contriver of dreams,
sing of the glad days to come
on the National Road,
of my path to the seas,
my road to the sun!

The Milestones

1749 A GROUP of Virginians received a grant of land in the Ohio country from King George II, of England, and formed the first Ohio Company.

1750 CHRISTOPHER GIST was employed by the first Ohio Company to blaze a roadway from Cumberland, Maryland, to the Ohio River, via Pittsburgh, and to report on land values in the Ohio country.

1752 GIST arranged with Nemacolin, a Delaware Indian, to mark out a path for this roadway.

1755 GENERAL BRADDOCK constructed a military road along the path laid out by Christopher Gist, going west from Cumberland to Laurel Hill, Pennsylvania, then northwest to Fort Duquesne. General Braddock was defeated near Fort Duquesne, July 19, and died at Great Meadows four days later.

1784 GENERAL WASHINGTON and Albert Gallatin discussed possibility of a road through Pennsylvania.

1796 COLONEL EBENEZER ZANE received permission from the Continental Congress on March 25 to open a road from Wheeling, Virginia (now West Virginia), to Limestone (now Maysville), Kentucky.

1799 JOHN MCINTIRE erected a tavern at Zanesville, Ohio.

1802 JACOB HALTZ opened a tavern at St. Clairsville, Ohio. CONGRESS appropriated $30,000 to defray expense of laying out and making a national road, April 14. THE ENABLING ACT granting a State Government for Ohio was passed by Congress on April 30.

1803 OHIO was admitted into the Union as a State, March 1. A COMPACT WAS MADE between Ohio and the Federal Government agreeing on a two percent levy on all Congress land sales in the State, to be set aside for national road purposes.

1805 ROBERT TAYLOR opened in Zanesville a tavern called the Orange Tree.

ON SEPTEMBER 30 it was reported to Congress that the Ohio Congress land sales from July 1802 to September

1804 amounted to $636,040.27, two percent of which ($12,652.00) was to be allotted to construction of the National Road.

ON DECEMBER 19 a Senate committee made its report to Congress; it suggested various routes to the West, but recommended the road from Baltimore to Cumberland westward.

1806 ON MARCH 29, President Jefferson signed the Congressional act establishing a national highway—to reach from Cumberland, Maryland, to the Mississippi, and to pass through the capitals of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Zanesville was only city mentioned by name in the document.

JEFFERSON on March 29 approved the act empowering him to appoint three commissioners for the National Road.

1808 ON JANUARY 1, the commissioners submitted a report to the President covering a survey made and recommending a straight line to the Ohio River. The report also suggested the straightening and widening of the old Braddock Road between Cumberland and Laurel Hill.

PRESIDENT JEFFERSON reported to Congress approval of the course charted for the National Road. It was to go from Cumberland to Brownsville, Pennsylvania, deviating to pass through Uniontown, Pennsylvania.

CONTRACTS were let for clearing the surveyed route of the National Road west of Cumberland.
SURVEYING was completed to Wheeling.

1810 SINCE ZANESVILLE was at this time the capital of Ohio, the State Legislature met in the Orange Tree Tavern.

1811 ON MARCH 3, Congress authorized the President to permit the National Road to deviate from the straight line approved, so that it could reach several towns, provided that the road did not miss the towns mentioned in the law (Wheeling and the capitals of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois).

PRESIDENT MADISON directed, on March 3, that $50,000 be paid from the General Fund to the builders of the National Road, Cumberland to Brownsville.

ON APRIL 6 a contract was let for building the first 10 miles of the National Road west of Cumberland.

PRESIDENT MADISON directed that $30,000 be paid from the General Fund for the road between Cumberland and Brownsville, on May 6.

A CONTRACT was let for the second section (11 miles) of the National Road west of Cumberland, in August. FIRST 10 MILES of the road west of Cumberland were completed in September, according to the engineers.

1813 PRESIDENT MADISON directed that $140,000 be paid from the General Fund for the road.

A CONTRACT was let for the third section (13 miles) of the road west of Cumberland, in August.

IN SEPTEMBER a contract was let for the fourth section (6½ miles) of the National Road west of Cumberland.

1815 PRESIDENT MADISON directed that $100,000 be paid from the General Fund for the road west of Cumberland, on February 14.

THE SECOND SECTION of 11 miles was finished, reported the engineers.

1816 PRESIDENT MONROE directed that $300,000 be paid from the General Fund for work on the National Road west of Cumberland.

1817 JESSE YOUNG opened the Eagle Tavern at Main Street and Putnam Bridge, Zanesville.

ENGINEERS announced the third section of 13 miles and the fourth section of 6½ miles of the National Road west of Cumberland had been completed.

A CONTRACT was let for the fifth section (22 miles) west of Cumberland.

1818 THE ROAD was completed from Cumberland to Wheeling, said the engineers.

BENJAMIN HARDING opened a tavern at the corner of Sixth and Main Streets, Zanesville, in September.

STAGE MAIL COACHES started operations over the road from Washington, D. C., to Wheeling.

1819 COST OF COMPLETING the road from Cumberland to Wheeling reached $285,000.

PRESIDENT MONROE directed that payment be made from the General Funds provided by the States of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.

1820 ON APRIL 11, President Monroe ordered that the balance of $141,000 for completing the National Road between Washington, Pennsylvania, and Wheeling be paid out of any money in the United States Treasury not otherwise appropriated.

ON MAY 15, Congress appropriated $10,000 to lay out a road 80 feet wide from Wheeling to the Mississippi; the President was authorized to expend for the purpose any monies in the treasury not otherwise appropriated.

1822 PRESIDENT MONROE vetoed an act to provide for preservation and repairs of the road and to establish toll gates along the road.

1823 CONGRESS AUTHORIZED payment of $25,000 for road repairs between Cumberland and Wheeling.

PRESIDENT MONROE appointed a superintendent of repairs to be paid at the rate of $3.00 per day.

1824 PRESIDENT MONROE signed the appropriation bill for the National Road.

THE OHIO LEGISLATURE conceded to the United States power to extend the National Road through Ohio.

1825 PRESIDENT MONROE appropriated $150,000 for building the National Road from Wheeling to the capital of Missouri—the Federal Government to survey, remove trees, grade the road, and build all bridges; the States to surface the road with at least nine inches of crushed rock.

GROUND WAS BROKEN, on July 4, for the road west of Wheeling, in front of the courthouse at St. Clairsville, Ohio.

U. S. COMMISSIONER JONATHAN KNIGHT reported to President Monroe in October that the road between Zanesville and Columbus was but one mile longer than if it were in a perfectly straight line, and that no grade in the road exceeded three degrees except in the 14-mile hilly section just west of Zanesville.

1826 ON MARCH 25 there was appropriated through the Military Service $110,749 for continuation of the Cumberland (National) Road.

IN JUNE Road Superintendents Weaver and Knight were authorized by the War Department to make a permanent location of the National Road between Fairview (Guernsey County) and Zanesville (Muskingum County).

THE ENGINEERS REPORTED (in July) having completed five bridges between the Ohio River and Fairview without loss of time or disability of workmen.

1827 ROAD SUPERINTENDENT KNIGHT made his report on the location of the National Road, between Zanesville and Columbus, to Congress on January 25.

ON MARCH 2, Congress appropriated, from the General Fund, the sum of $170,000 for construction of the road between Bridgeport and Zanesville and for continuing the survey from Zanesville to St. Louis.

ON MARCH 2, Congress appropriated the sum of $510 due the road superintendent west of Wheeling and also $30,000 for repairs on the road between Cumberland and Wheeling.

IN JUNE the road was completed from Bridgeport to St. Clairsville.

IN JULY the road was completed from St. Clairsville to Fairview and Cambridge.

CONTRACTS were let, on July 21, for constructing 21 miles of the road east of Zanesville.

A PLEA was made to Congress in March to lead the National Road through Dayton and Eaton, Ohio.

THE NATIONAL ROAD between Bridgeport and Cambridge was opened to the public in July; at this time the road was paved to Fairview and graded the rest of the way to Cambridge.

1828 STUMPING SENATOR MCDUFFIE of South Carolina predicted that if Andrew Jackson were elected to the Presidency, instead of John Quincy Adams, the road would stop at Zanesville.

OHIO PASSED A LAW, on April 11, assuming responsibility for permanent repair of the road.

CONGRESS DIRECTED, on May 19, the appropriation of $175,000 for completion of the road to Zanesville, the

money to be taken from the land sale fund of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.

THE SECRETARY OF WAR relieved the President of the duties of directing the construction of the road.

1829 ON MARCH 2, Congress authorized the appropriation of $100,000 for opening the National Road west of Zanesville. A contract was let for building the road from Zanesville to Columbus.

CONGRESS on March 2 appropriated $51,600 for laying out the National Road to a width of 80 feet east and west of Indianapolis. At the same time Congress authorized the hiring of a road superintendent at $800 a year.

CONGRESS appropriated, on March 3, $100,000 for repairing bridges on that section of the road between Cumberland and Wheeling.

CONSTRUCTION of the road between Zanesville and Columbus was begun.

1830 AARON L. HUNT opened a tavern in Springfield beside the route of the National Road on January 1.

JOHN WATSON opened the Watson Hotel, a stop for all stage coaches in the heart of Columbus, April 2.

JAMES ROBINSON opened Robinson's Tavern in Columbus during April.

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT conveyed all finished sections of the National Road to the States through which it passed.

CONGRESS appropriated $215,000, mainly for opening and grading the National Road west of Zanesville, and in Indiana and Illinois, May 31.

IN JULY bids were advertised for building the road west of Columbus.

THE NATIONAL ROAD, reported the engineers, was completed to Zanesville.

DIFFICULTIES were met in keeping traffic on the road because of damage to hooves of horses and cattle. (Only stage coach horses were shod.)

A CONTRACT was let for building the road from Columbus to Springfield.

1831 ON FEBRUARY 4 the Ohio Legislature authorized the erection of toll gates at 20-mile intervals (and one to a county) on the National Road.

VIRGINIA, MARYLAND, AND PENNSYLVANIA imposed tolls on the National Road.

TOLL GATES were established on the road in Ohio.

THE SECRETARY OF WAR superseded the President in the disbursing of funds for the road.

1832 ZANESVILLE'S SETH ADAMS, tollkeeper, reported the year's National Road traffic east of Zanesville as follows: 35,310 men on horseback, 16,750 horses and mules driven, 24,410 sheep driven, 52,845 hogs driven, 96,323 cattle driven, 14,907 one-horse carriages, 11,613 two-horse carriages and wagons, 2,357 wagons with three horses.

JOHN NOBLE opened the National Hotel and Ohio Stage Line office in Columbus.

HENRY CLAY, UNITED STATES SENATOR from Kentucky, traveled the National Road frequently. When a stage overturned, he declared to the driver: "This, sir, is mixing Kentucky Clay with Ohio limestone."

1833 WILLIAM NEIL, Columbus, was refused permission, by a State legislative vote of 18 to 17, to operate seven steam carriages over the road.

J. ROBINSON & SONS opened a tavern in Columbus along the road, on December 14.

THE NATIONAL ROAD was completed from Zanesville to Columbus, according to the engineers.

TOLL CHARGES on the National Road for the year netted the State of Ohio $12,259.42.

1834 A REPORT noted there were two taverns to every mile of the road in Ohio between the Ohio River and Zanesville.

FOUR STAGE LINES were put into operation on the National Road in Ohio—Ohio State Company, Citizens Line, Peoples Line, and Good Intent Line.

ON MARCH 3 an act passed by Congress directed the Secretary of War to survey the possibility of having the road from Springfield, Ohio, to Richmond, Indiana, go via Dayton and Eaton.

THE NATIONAL ROAD COMMITTEE of the United States Senate, on April 5, debated continuation of the National Road through Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.

THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS considered a bill, on May 17, proposing that, after appropriations for the road were expended, the Federal Government transfer to the States all obligations for the National Road. Appropriations of $652,130 were approved the same day.

FIELD SUPERINTENDENCE of the National Road was placed in the hands of the Topographical Bureau of the War Department.

1835 THROUGH AN ACT Congress approved the decision of the President, made after the War Department review, to maintain the original straight course of the road.

1836 THE SUPERINTENDENT OF REPAIRS of the National Road in Ohio was instructed, on March 1, to report to the House of Representatives the length of time stage coaches had run on the road since the erection of toll gates, the amount of toll paid to December 31, 1835, the number of coaches operated by each line, and the average amount paid quarterly by such stage lines.

A BILL APPROPRIATING $600,000 for the National Road in Ohio was passed by the House and the Senate.

THE OHIO LEGISLATURE passed a law placing all works of internal improvement under the supervision of the Board of Public Works.

1837 C. F. DRESBACH & CO. opened a tavern on High Street, Columbus, opposite the State House, on March 3, and established a reputation for comfort and entertainment.

BIDS WERE INVITED for building the National Road west of Springfield, in August.

CONTRACT was let for building the road west of Springfield.

THE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT of the United States contracted with the Great Western Express and Mail

Line for carrying mails over the National Road from Washington to St. Louis, Missouri.

ENGINEERS' REPORT to the United States Government showed the cost of the National Road to date: for the section east of the Ohio River, $2,000,881.23; for repairs throughout, $960,503.08; for the section west of the Ohio River, $3,863,335.02—a total of $6,824,919.33.

1838 CONGRESS on May 25 made the last of a series of appropriations from the fund of land sales in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Its total appropriation amounted to seven million dollars, of which two million were spent in Ohio.

THE ROAD was completed to Springfield.

THREE MILES of the road were finished west of Springfield, western terminus for Congressional appropriation.

THE DAYTON & SPRINGFIELD TURNPIKE CO. was organized by private capital stock sold to the public, and road building contracts were let immediately. The road in every detail matched the National Road, even to the extent of mile markers showing distance from Cumberland, Maryland. After its completion, it was often mistaken for the National Road.

1839 THE ROAD SUPERINTENDENT in Ohio reported tolls collected on the National Road as $40,000 for the year 1837 and $52,870.78 for the year 1838.

THE NATIONAL ROAD was graded from Springfield to Englewood.

1840 THE ROAD SUPERINTENDENT in Ohio reported tolls collected on the National Road for the year 1839 amounted to $51,364.67.

THE NATIONAL ROAD was graded to the Indiana State Line.

1846 REDDING HUNTING, who drove the mail coach from Washington to Wheeling, made a record run to carry President Polk's proclamation that a state of war existed between the United States and Mexico.

1854 THE NATIONAL ROAD from the Ohio River to Springfield, Ohio, was leased to private concerns.

1859 THE BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS of the State of Ohio resumed control of the National Road to prevent bankruptcy of the lessees.

1876 THE OHIO STATE LEGISLATURE authorized the county commissioners of several counties to assume control of the National Road.

1877 NEW RATES OF TOLL were left to the discretion of the various county commissioners.

1901 THE COLUMBUS AND BUCKEYE LAKE Electric Railway was put into operation; this new mode of transportation, flanking the road from Columbus to Hebron, brought new interest and life east of Columbus.

1906 THE INDIANA, COLUMBUS & EASTERN Electric Railway Company started operation, reviving interest in the road west of Columbus; the line flanked the road from Columbus to Springfield.

1914 INCREASED AUTOMOBILE TRAFFIC (122,500 registrations this year) brought the need for sturdier road surfaces.

THE FIRST WATER-BOUND MACADAM, the first brick, and the first concrete was used as paving material on the road in Ohio.

1932 THE FIRST ASPHALT MIXTURE was applied to the surface of the road on the theory that it would not only have better resiliency, but also provide a dark road for the protection of the motorists' eyes.

1939 THE LAST ELECTRIC LINE, the Cincinnati & Lake Erie Traction Company, successor to the Ohio Electric Railway Company, was abandoned.

1940 TRAFFIC FLOW RECORDS show that 6,346 motor vehicles pass a given point (near the city of Columbus) every 24 hours. Of this amount 23.6 percent is interstate traffic.

THE AMOUNT OF MONEY expended on the road through Ohio, for maintenance only, for a period of 25 years dating back from this year, was $11,000,000.

Stoneman Press, Columbus Ohio

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